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A word from the editor

*Kamiriithu* may be the only journal of its kind on the planet. Its pages question every aspect of ‘learning’ provided in formal institutions – especially school and college – even while they open windows to new perceptions.

Fifty years ago, everyone went to school without question. Teachers taught, students studied. Increasingly, those circumstances have changed. Large numbers of people still do go to school and college but a significant number now escape the cuckoo’s nest: they either walk out or they come to a truce if only to survive. The vast majority of those who take the ‘learning circus’ seriously, simply succumb, following the hook-line laid out by ‘the system’. Like all fish who fall for the line and take the bait, the ocean of learning simply evaporates, leaving assured serfdom to the demands of the “system” and its goals for the rest of their years.

The ‘development project’ is always in need of a trained army of hopefuls who are willing to trade in their precious lives for a fee or wage. What system is this, which requires every child to forgo its childhood, its play, its fun, its longing for life, to submit to ten years of clear child labour and drudgery, carrying heavy weights of books, studying stuff that is in many cases mouldy, moth-eaten and vacuous. And what is the prize? An arbitrary ranking. In what? The ability to vomit what one has sense-less-ly mugged.

The college or university curriculum in countries like India is an even more ludicrous prospect. Here what is taught is even more worthless and many of the people who teach should long ago have been shifted to museums. But take a country like India, obviously heir to a grand and lively tradition of learning, philosophising, literature and

art. What do they teach at college instead? You may be surprised to know.

Delhi university, located within the capital city of India, teaches courses in humanities and social sciences that are mostly Eurocentric. Now why would anyone want to do this? Why teach Western philosophy in an Indian university, for example, when India is already crammed with living philosophical traditions that continue to move, guide and inspire people all over the world? Yet, incredibly, a student doing an undergraduate course in ‘philosophy’ will have to answer an examination in which 80 marks are reserved for Western philosophy and 20 marks for Indian philosophy. In psychology, despite effective psychotherapeutic traditions and other schools of effective personal healing, almost 100% of the psychology course is restricted to a diet of the worst kind of American psychological science which sometime ago had reduced human behaviour to gobbledygook ratology.

It is simply tragic that when youngsters need guidance to make sense of their lives, when their interest in life and living is intense, all of them must be tied down to textbooks, mindless mugging and other strange obsessions. Even the most successful of institutions, the

IITs for example, are getting worried because students who complete the prestigious IIT degree courses still want to do an MBA, which is nothing but short form for ‘Major Business Ass’.

At Multiversity – a little concerned about this state of affairs – we set up a small group of independent researchers to draw up a new curriculum for an undergraduate philosophy course for Indian universities. That exercise has recently been completed and the curriculum will shortly be printed – and also posted on the web at [www.multiworld.org](http://www.multiworld.org). We have now turned our attention to psychology, sociology and political science. We feel strongly that if we are to teach humanities and social sciences, they should at least be non-Eurocentric. Indians should teach (and practise) Indian philosophy and Africans should have easy access to African philosophies. The Islamic countries, at any rate, are in many cases teaching Islamic philosophy. This is the natural thing to do.

Many people are getting excited about this work at Multiversity and we are finally getting people writing in asking how they can join the effort. Eventually we hope to cut our way through all the disciplines, in each case testing and critiquing them for their Eurocentric bias, reformulating the assumptions required for fresh definitions of what knowledge in these areas ought to contain or comprise of.

Multiworld.org functions as an open university for this kind of critical, reconstructive work, while pointing as well to learning opportunities that are free, endless and which do not need certification.

Kamiriithu: What’s in a name?

The story behind the name of this journal – *Kamiriithu* – has been recounted in earlier issues and on the Multiworld website. However, since we keep getting new readers every issue and their curiosity also needs to be taken into account, we have decided to carry information on this matter in every future issue. See p. 7.

2007 Vol.II No.5

The Multiworld Network's Newsletter

Kamiriithu

UN MUNDO EN QUE QUEPAN MUCHOS MUNDOS

# Multiworld websites



MULTIWORLD

TALEEMNET

MULTIVERSITY

NATURAL FARMING INSTITUTE

### Welcome to Multiworld

A celebration of the diversity of learning experience across the planet. A website dedicated to the conservation of 'a world in which many worlds are embraced' (Zapatistas saying). Multiworld promotes learning systems which respect natural principles, indigenous wisdom, 'thinking with the hand' - and which root their foundations and identities well outside the formal cages of the Western knowledge system. In Multiworld, we invite you to learn the heart way. Forever.



## The brand new Multiworld website! Enjoy!

The new Multiworld website is a colourful spectacle. Naturally, for it reflects the people of colour. It came up thanks to some high speed designing and late night sessions with Milind (of goobimama associates), and some brilliant world-class photographs from the Novib calendars. The navigation and re-organization of the content is still on. Please log on, browse through and provide your feedback. We intend to make this into the world's best learning site: natural, free, accessible to all.

### www.multiworld.org

Multiworld.org is the principal Multiworld website. We are encouraging educational activists in every country within the South to have their own Multiworld chapter and site, operated by their own core group. Naturally, several of these will be in their own national, regional or local languages, with crosslinks to the main Multiworld page.

The main website will also eventually host discussions on learning themes in the principal languages of the South: Hindi, Chinese, Swahili, Spanish, Arabic, Farsi, etc.

Multiworld.org also hosts the Multiversity webpage, the Taleemnet webpage and the organic agriculture webpage of the Natural Farming Institute.

At Multiversity, present preoccupation is with the design of social science and humanities curricula that are non-Eurocentric. A redesigned curriculum for Indian universities for the philosophy undergraduate course will soon be put on the website. Similarly with psychology.

We also provide linkages to several other sites which are working in converging directions, including Shikshantar and the Gap Year College of SIDH

If you come across interesting sites that should be linked with the Multiworld page, please inform us.

The multiworld.org site has undergone a recent design change and updation owing to Milind (a typical multiversity product). We welcome comments and contributions to the multiworld webpage from sympathetic colleagues and friends in Asia, Africa and South America. This Network is not designed to be run from above, but through its numerous constituents.

You can also join the e-group set up by Multiversity from the website.

### alternative learning

This site is exclusively for reporting on discussions and experiments on learning outside school walls or outside the framework of 'factory schooling'.

Taleemnet is actually the first major network dedicated exclusively to de-schooling or unschooling experiments in Asia, Africa and South America. It is determined to reverse the processes of colonial education which still persist in our countries despite political independence.

Taleemnet aims to create an international community of parents and students who take a decision to 'walk-out' of school and resume their own learning using their own (and Multiversity) resources.

Educators, parents and students are encouraged to visit the website to learn about the mental and spiritual damage that is done to children and learners when they submit themselves to the coercive processes of formal schooling.

After reading the critique, parents may be interested in knowing what other parents are doing in different parts of the country and abroad.

The site features stories of children who have done better out of school than if they had continued with it.

The site also provides a detailed overview of educational systems outside the purview of Western educational institutions. All the prominent thinkers on education from the Global South are also featured, together with their writings.

Links are provided to significant home-schooling movements within the industrialised countries where there is an even greater mental anguish about the negative impact of schooling on the personality development of children and youth.

### organic agriculture

This website site deals exclusively with the field of organic agricultural science research and the workings of the Natural Farming Institute.

Traditional agriculture in almost all countries has been replaced by imported agribusiness science based on the use of copious synthetic chemicals and toxic pesticides.

In several countries farmers, in fact, have completely lost the indigenous knowledge of farming and are now finding it difficult to survive with an alien system of growing crops that is not only unprofitable but actually devastates their soils and environment.

The site will report on intellectual work carried out by farmers and innovations in the area of restoring soil fertility, improving the micro-community of soil species and organisms, homemade inputs, etc.

The main activities of organic farming are carried out under the auspices of the Organic Farming Association of India which has located its central secretariat in Goa. (See its website: [www.ofai.org](http://www.ofai.org).)

The first major activity of OFAI has been the conducting of training camps for farmers eager to turn away from chemical farming.

One special focus is the children of organic farmers who once they go to school, find themselves alienated from the land and from agriculture. The Natural Farming Institute is working to formulate a curriculum for home schooling of children of such farmers, so that they can be well versed with both, the demands of living in the modern world and the knowledge and expertise required for agriculture. A recent report commissioned from Sarang on a rural curriculum is posted on the NFI site.

### multiversity usa

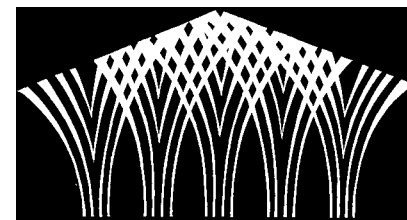
Vinay Lal, Indian historian now domiciled in the US and a participant in both the Penang conferences on redesign of social science curricula, has hosted the USA equivalent of Multiversity at the above site. You can access it at: <http://vllal.bol.ucla.edu/multiversity/>

The site also provides details of a series of pamphlets brought out by Vinay Lal on thinkers and articles of consequence for scholars interested in multiversity themes. (Vinay Lal is now located in Delhi for the next two years.)



The discussions that have taken place in the meetings of the Multiversity project have been transcribed and are now available on the website and also in print form. People interested can order copies of *Multiversity* from Other India Bookstore. A copy costs Rs.150.

# Multiversity



I teach history but I'm not a historian. In a nutshell, what I'm going to tell you today is don't be interested in anybody's history, and don't be interested in your own history either.

Indians haven't been very much bothered with writing their own history, forget about the world. From 1100 A.D. onwards you begin to get a few histories, which are all from the Islamic tradition. But before 1000 A.D. there is virtually no work which you could call a history, in the sense of actual history.

There are other issues too. What does an Indian mean by the world? What conception of the world did an Indian have in 1400? In fact, *the conception of the world which some Indians might have had was probably much bigger in 1400 than what it was in 1850 after we had been civilized by the British*. Reason being that in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the west coast of India was a highly cosmopolitan place.

There is a series of about nine different issues that I have framed with the intent of trying to understand what we would have to do if we were trying to radically revise our syllabus in history.

**No.1: The first question is, what do we mean by history.** That may seem like a rather trivial question but it isn't. Two very simple distinctions can be made. One is that when we say history, most historians mean two things: one is the study of the past or what happened in the past, howsoever the past might be defined whether it's remote antiquity or something that happened two days ago. And then there's the study of the writing of history which translates into historiography.

If you have to make a very simple distinction, you could say that historians work with the category of time, much like geographers work with the category of space. But that distinction is not particularly useful. Because for example, if you were trying to understand 'development' which is one of the reigning words in the modern lexicon, are these spatial categories or are these temporal categories? I think that you would have to answer that they're both. In fact, in some ways, they are pre-eminently temporal although we think they are

## Teaching Non-Eurocentric History

- By Prof. Vinay Lal, UCLA

*Continuing with the reproduction of important presentations from the Penang II Conference of Multiversity, this issue of Kamiriithu brings you the speech of Prof. Vinay Lal from the University of California on the issues involved with the learning and teaching of a non-Eurocentric history curriculum.*



*Prof. Vinay Lal making a point about non-Eurocentric history during the Penang conference*

spatial. Under-developed means the Third World and Developed means the First World. But of course it is very clear that the whole notion of development is predicated on what I would call a time lag.

...Obviously, the interesting question now is how do historians spatialize their categories and how do geographers temporalise their categories. This is what I mean by the question, 'What do we mean by history.' Was it simply the study of the past and would the study of the past be quite adequate? So what forms of knowing does history encompass and have people always been interested in these forms of knowing. The direction that I would take is that *there are civilisations in India that fundamentally have not been interested in the enterprise of what we would call history*.

**No.2. How do we write the history of the ascendancy of history?** That's a very serious question. There are historiographers who spend their entire lifetime on this. ...When did people in the West first acquire a taste for history? In Elizabethan England, there is enough work to show that the taste for history began to be encountered in the middle class in about 1550. But by the early nineteenth century, history as a way of knowing has

become institutionalized. ...The most offensive thing you can tell a person, representing a particular group, whether linguistic, ethnic or religious, is that they don't have a history. Everybody wants to claim that they have a history. So what are the consequences of staking that particular position?

**No.3 : What is the particular relationship of history to the Nation State?** Is history the particular form of knowledge most appropriate to the nation state than other forms of knowledge? It seems that the textbook controversies would suggest that it really is the case to a very large degree. I might add that this ... textbook controversy is...raging in the United States as well. What's interesting is that in India till relatively recently you really had no traditions of history. The ascendancy of history in India is all the more remarkable, in view of that fact.

**No.4: There is no more clichéd operation that I can think of today than the distinction between History and Myth. Things that we don't like or disown or want to disown, we call Myth. When did this separation of History and Myth take place?** I would argue that it took place in the western world as far back as the time of Thucydides.

In ancient Greek there were two major figures Herodotus, who in the 6<sup>th</sup> century wrote 'The Histories' and Thucydides who comes about a century later, in the earlier part of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Thucydides is very clear that you have to reject Herodotus because his history is not objective enough. There is too much of myth in it. There is too much about people who are half-animals and half-something else.

Indian nationalists were eager to make the separation of history and myth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the test cases for that is the treatment of the 'Mahabharata' because there you see the conflict very easily. Indian nationalist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wants to historicise certain portions of the Mahabharata particularly Gita and he wants to turn Krishna into a historical figure. On the other hand Gandhi comes up with the observation that the Mahabharata is much more interesting than Gibbon because the writers of the 'Mahabharata' were not burdened by the enterprise of trying to have to prove themselves to be factual and objective. Gandhi entirely rejects the claim that Krishna should be viewed as some kind of historical deity.

**No.5: Is history the only way of comprehending the past?** This is crucial here because it seems other ways of comprehending the past have a built-in mechanism which history doesn't. *The argument fundamentally is that other forms of knowing the past are not simply ways of remembering the past but also of forgetting the past. What is crucial to forms of knowing the past is also forgetfulness. History is fundamentally a way of remembering.* So there is a disjunction there that one would have to think about and this might very well be one of the things that distinguishes history from other ways of comprehending the past whether you call them oral narratives or traditional wisdom, folk tales, and so on.

**No.6: What is the relationship of History to Temporality, to Time? How does history treat Time and is not actually predicated on some notion of what we call the Universal Time?** Of course there is the problem that time itself has been highly homogenized in the West over the course of the

last 500 years. In fact, as late as 1840s, in the United States there were about 70 time zones. One of the reasons for standardizing or homogenizing the notion of time was because the expansion of trade and commerce cannot be conducted with a lax notion of time. This notion of standardization of time has an intrinsic relationship to the enterprise of History, because History as we do it at present is predicated on some standardized notion of time that we all accept.

**No.7: It has been argued by a number of people that no matter what kind of history we do, (and here I'm speaking by the way of national histories, such as the history of China or India, or Peru) Europe is always the reference point, stated or otherwise, of those histories.** Let me give you an illustration of two ways in which one can understand that kind of claim.

One of the ways in which we think we're being more progressive is when we do Comparative History. Comparative History fundamentally means that you do Europe on the one hand and the rest of it is fill-in-the-blank. If you happen to be Indian, it's Europe and India. If you're Peruvian, it's Europe and Peru and so on. When I say Europe, I mean the West, whether it includes America or not. Fundamentally, that's what Comparative History means in 99% of the cases. There are very few comparative historians who are going to spend a lifetime studying the relationship between Peru and South Africa or Peru and Zimbabwe or whatever the case might be. Comparative History means that one axis is always fixed and the other is determined by the national origins of the subject conducting that study, or the particular area that that person has picked. ...*So when we do History, Europe remains always the reference point, even when our work apparently has nothing to do with Europe whatsoever.*

**No.8: Let me move to the enterprise of World History.**

I think there are fundamental problems with the enterprise of World History. I'll give you again one illustration. When we do world history, it's not merely a matter of examining how much space has been allotted to say Nehru or Aurobindo or Gandhi vis-à-vis Jefferson, Washington and John Adams and the founding fathers of the USA, for example have. That's not the real issue. The question is that even when Gandhi is discussed he is as a model for Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, and so on. *He*

*has never been incorporated in the World History textbook as a critic of modernity because that would be a fundamental problem for those who are writing history itself. So, even if you make space for somebody within the notion of world history, this is a space that has already cut out the possibility of a dissenting perspective.*

It would be utterly naïve to think that simply increasing the number of pages or even actually putting in all of these figures, somehow gives us some kind of world histories. So we obviously have to ask, who is world history for? What is the conception of the 'world' in world? What is the relationship of world history to modernity? As far as I am aware there is no textbook of world history which really takes as its central enterprise, a history of modernity and a history of counter-modernity because most world history textbooks would still be predicated on notions of time and space in the conventional sense.

**No.9: Finally, I want to re-emphasize the point I had made much earlier about the importance of categories.** Ashis and I finished a book, about a year ago, which is coming out next month called, 'The Future of Knowledge and Culture Dictionary for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.' There's a piece in there by Barry Sanders on literacy. Now, Barry Sanders argues very rightly that if you actually look at the Oxford English Dictionary, you will find the word 'literacy' first came into use in the English language only in 1885. The word 'literate' has been around for a much longer time, for several hundred years. There is an enormous difference between 'literate'. *Literacy is basically a form of modern day eugenics. Literacy now becomes a form of evaluation of an entire civilisation.* Which is why, if you look at UNDP Reports, one of the three main criteria, to judge where a country stands on the Index of Development, is the rate of literacy. We have to understand that literacy is a category that we all prize, but it can also oppress. And that's fundamentally what I'm arguing about - the category of history.

*(For the full transcript, go to: [www.multiworld.com](http://www.multiworld.com))*

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## Redesign of Philosophy Curriculum for Undergraduates in India

Multiversity has taken up first the redesign of the philosophy curriculum for undergraduates in Indian universities. For this it set up a group of persons committed to the idea which included former philosophy teacher, Gurveen Kaur (Hyderabad), Anuradha Veeravalli (Delhi University, Philosophy), Vishram Gupte (also a philosophy lecturer now located in Goa) and Ram Subramaniam. Claude Alvares (himself trained in philosophy) was group convenor.

The group had meetings in Delhi and Goa over several days. A first draft of ideas was prepared and circulated. The group found that most curricula in Indian universities in the department of philosophy were still restricted to largely Western philosophers. Since these had very little relevance to Indian problems or did not even remotely link up with the student's cultural concerns, gradually over the years students have dropped out from philosophy courses. Some universities now only have lecturers and professors, but no students to teach. For this, they are themselves partly responsible.

The issue was whether this could be changed and whether it was possible to do a completely Indian course for philosophy for undergraduates at Indian universities.

The basic thrust of the effort was on the preparation of a course that would be completely Indian and would link with Indian intellectual traditions. Western philosophy would be seen critically through Indian eyes.

The first draft of three pages was then circulated and revised several times in circulation among members of the group.

The final draft was agreed to at the recent Multiversity conference held in Goa in the second week of November, 2007

The curriculum review took into consideration the work of the model curriculum group set up by the University Grants Commission that had redesigned the philosophy course for undergraduates in the year 2000.

The multiversity group has also proposed a radical shift in learning methodologies for Indian students. The main ambition is to draw students to college with an interesting and dynamic approach in place of the present wholesale reliance on lectures which is doing nothing but driving students from classes.

The Multiversity undergraduate course is now under print and will shortly be available as a booklet for circulation among Indian universities. It will also be placed on the [www.multiworld.org](http://www.multiworld.org) website. We do look to comments from one and all.

Multiversity is now constituting groups for psychology, sociology, political science, economics and the performing arts. If you are excited about this work, please contact us and join. We need the assistance of confident qualified people from these fields.

Everyone is convinced that we should move away from Eurocentric models of social sciences and humanities in all our universities. But unless some hard, dedicated work is put into actually doing some curriculum design in this direction, business will continue as usual.

# A non-Eurocentric sociology is possible

**Prof. Farid Alatas**



Prof. Farid Alatas of the University of Singapore on how they created a non-Eurocentric sociology syllabus

Multiversity is pleased to announce the arrival of a book on the social sciences that reflects many of its concerns.

*Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Sciences* by Prof. Syed Farid Alatas has recently been published by Sage (New Delhi).

Prof. Farid Alatas is a distinguished member of the Multiversity family and attended the Penang meeting to discuss his work on the redesign of social science.

Here we provide an extract from the book defining the problem of the social sciences but recommend that readers buy the book since it is well worth its salt.

Both Alatas and Sinha from the University of Singapore have been boldly experimenting with non-Eurocentric curricula at their institution. They effectively show that if scholars, professors and lecturers want to change the grim reality of Eurocentric teaching, nothing need come in their way.

## Main issues diagnosed:

Defining the problem of the social sciences:

1. There is a Eurocentric bias in that ideas, models, problem selection, methodologies, techniques and even research priorities tend to originate exclusively from American, British, and to some extent, French and German works.
2. There is a general neglect of local literary and philosophical traditions. While there may be studies on local literature or philosophy,

these traditions remain objects of study and are not considered as sources of concepts in social sciences.

3. The lack of creativity or the inability of social scientists outside of the Euro-American cultural area to generate original theories and methods (Sinha, 1998: 19). There is a lack of original ideas in terms of generation of novel concepts, new theoretical perspectives or schools of thought or innovations

## MV Stories: Diners Club Cards and Scholar's Literature

'Two years ago I read out a page from a research paper on education and national development in class. I was talking about Singapore. Not one of my students suspected that I was reading an article by an Indian or India. I simply substituted for the word "India" the word "Singapore" and the whole material was suddenly equally valid for Singapore. The habit of using general concepts such as "modern", "achievement", "goals", "planning" and so forth has given birth to a body of scholars' literature (I refrain from using "scholarly") comparable to Diner's Club cards. They can be used everywhere. It is the preoccupation of the captive mind to indulge in the use of such imported concepts without a proper and meaningful linkage to the objective situation.' – narrated by Prof. Syed Alatas at the Penang II Conference of Multiversity

in research methods.

4. Mimesis refers to the uncritical adoption or imitation of western social science models (Sinha, 1998: 19). Eades (1997) provides an example of this by referring to the theorizing of the Chinese anthropologist well grounded in Sahlins, Firth and Mauss as being largely

irrelevant to the Chinese case as a result of the poor ethnography on which the work is based (ibid.: 41-42). Related to this is the problem of auto-Orientalism, i.e., the internalization of the orientalist ideas developed in the west and then consumed in those areas that are the object of such Orientalist constructions.

5. European discourses on non western societies tended to lead to essentialist constructions of these societies, 'confirming' that they were the opposite of what Europe represented, that is, barbaric, backward, and irrational (Sinha 1998: 11-12).

6. The absence of minority points of view. For example, Evans (1997) notes that in the multitude of materials gathered by Chinese, Vietnamese and Lao ethnographers there is 'no tradition of recording minority "voices"' (ibid.: 10). If we understand by 'minority' not just ethnic minorities but all other disadvantaged and underprivileged groups then we may define such social science as dominated by an elitist perspective.

7. Alignment with the state. The role that disciplines such as anthropology and geography played in the colonial period continues to define them in the present day.

For example, anthropology is in the service of the state as far as the promotion of national integration, control over state policies, and the creation of a national culture are concerned (Evans, 1997: 8; Pieke, 1997: 6; Ramstedt, 1995: 15).

8. The above problems can be seen to exist within the context of aca-

## Chapters in 'Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Science':

- Introduction
- The central problem of the Social Sciences in Asia: Critique, diagnosis and prescription
- The structure of academic dependency and the global division of labour in the Social Sciences
- The definition and variety of alternative discourses in Asia
- Nativist or autonomous Social Sciences: A class of orientations
- Towards an adequate conceptualization of relevance and irrelevance in the Social Sciences
- Alternative discourses and power
- Rethinking the teaching of the Social Sciences
- The prospects and future of alternative discourses in Asia

'Alternative Discourses' is published by Sage and is available from:

[www.sagepub.in](http://www.sagepub.in) or any bookstore.

Price: Rs.550 (HB)

demic or intellectual imperialism (Alatas, 2000a), that is, the intellectual domination of third world by social science powers (United States, Britain and France). As a result of such problems a number of theories of social science emerged. These sought to theorize the state of the social sciences and humanities in post colonial societies and include the theory of Orientalism (Said, 1979, 1990), the theory of mental captivity (Alatas, 1972a, 1974), pedagogical theories of modernization (Al-e Ahmad, nd; Freire, 1970; Illich, 1973), the colonial critique of Cesaire (1972), Memmi (1967) and Fanon (1968), and academic dependency theory (Alatas, 1995b; Altbach, 1997; Altbach and Selvaratnam, 1989; Garreau, 1985) and others.

# Evolving an Indian Psychology Curriculum

*Dr. Sudhir Kakkar is one of the leading psychologists of India today. He trained originally in Western psychological traditions and also practised in the West, primarily in Europe. However, he is also one of the few that have tried to understand India's traditional psychological traditions and articulate them through his writings. Claude Alvares and Vishram and Sheela Gupte met Dr Kakkar at his adopted home in Goa on behalf of Multiversity to understand why is it that the stream of psychology teaching is so Eurocentric. Some extracts from the interview. See [www.multiworld.org](http://www.multiworld.org) for the rest.*



Dr. Sudhir Kakkar and Vishram Gupte in conversation at Goa on the problem of why Indian psychology is not taught in India

**Gupte:** I have read psychology and I have also taught psychology to undergraduate students for some years. When you teach subjects like child psychology, social psychology all the parameters are basically, I think, Eurocentric. We are interested in creating some sort of Indian paradigm in psychology, reflected in a book like *The Inner World*. Can we have a text or course which will talk exclusively in terms of Indian psychology? How an Indian child is brought up? How does he or she cope with the process of growing up? I am convinced that there is nothing like a universal psychology. So how do we go in this direction? How can we produce Indian psychology for Indian undergraduates, those who are initiated into the discipline of psychology. Can we proceed along these lines? As a psychoanalyst or psychologist, what do you say?

**Dr Kakkar:** I don't think there is any kind of hindrance to do that. Some anthropologists are doing it. Such efforts are scattered at the moment.

**Alvares:** The fundamental question we are asking here is, are all the social sciences in a certain sense, universal? As you said, they have got their own assumptions. Those assumptions prevailed at that time and become dominant. Now they have become dominant all over the world, but it doesn't mean that the assumptions are anything more than dominant or dominating assumptions. They are assumptions of that society, of

a group of people of that time, and there is no point in saying that those assumptions should be exclusively valid. Because we, in India, too have our own assumptions, not that we don't have them. The only difference is, they are not being discussed in the same way. If you raise the Eurocentric charge then you really destroy the claims of conventional social science to be universal.

**Dr Kakkar:** Yes. Every society has its own social science. I would suggest practically that an undergraduate course in psychology could be based on the life-cycle approach. This developmental approach is important in the Indian setting, what happens again in the caste settings, etc., since we have different castes and what are those differences, etc. I would like to put all this in the life-cycle of young children, even adolescents because adolescence is a very different stage and is critical for the understanding of generational conflicts. Generational tensions exist because that is normal in a young person.

But in the Indian context, the generational conflict is different, we stretch it, we don't break it. But there in the West it is expected that you break the bond ... that anyone living at home at the age of 18 means something is wrong. And that is becoming universal. This is what one can visit and say that this is the Indian way of doing things. That we do it this way. They may do it the other way, but that need not be the

model for everyone, a universal one. So, looking at the same time when we are doing Indian things, looking at it also means... maybe we Indians are open to all differences. We become narrow and close because we only think about it in one way... this is very critical. We must look, at the same time, to the Western equivalents. I think students should be open to that also.

**Alvares:** No, no, that we insist...

**Dr Kakkar:** It would be good comparative psychology.

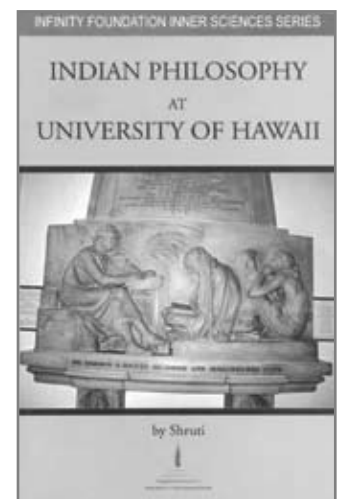
**Alvares:** But the problem right now is if you go to London University where they are teaching philosophy, they don't teach six papers in Indian philosophy and two papers in western philosophy, like we do in Indian universities. They teach western philosophy. They say we are Westerners. This is our philosophy. This is what we teach to our society. So when we come to India, we do the same thing here. We would teach Indian philosophy because we are Indians and these are our intellectual traditions and this is what we would like to tell.

**Dr Kakkar:** Yes, so when you are teaching this subject in India, you can teach what is happening in India. For example, the mother and child interaction that shapes the child's development in India. Now, what do the Chinese say about it and what do the Westerners say about it and each step, one can then understand the entire picture of comparative psychology.

## Infinity Foundation on Indian Psychology Course Work

The Infinity Foundation headed by Rajiv Malhotra has been doing outstanding work on formulating curricula for American universities on Indian philosophy and Indian psychology.

A good introduction to the work of the Foundation in these areas is to be found in a book edited by Shruti (IF chief in India) titled, *Indian Philosophy at University of Hawaii*.



The book indicates that the Foundation has completed an undergraduate curriculum of studies for Indian psychology in American universities.

Multiworld.org has a link to the Infinity Foundation from where you can get access to all the Foundation's work including a free download of the above book. You can also order it for Rs.150 from Other India Bookstore, Goa, where you get all multiversity titles, and also from the following publisher:

### Vidhi Vedika Heritage Pvt. Ltd

206 South Ex Plaza  
389 Masjid Moth  
South Extn. Part II  
New Delhi 110 049  
email: [vvheritage@gmail.com](mailto:vvheritage@gmail.com)  
Price: Rs.150

Ngugi & Kamiriithu

When a name was being discussed for the Multiversity Network Newsletter, we decided to opt for Africa and found our inspiration in Kamiriithu.

The Kamiriithu Community Education Centre was an unusual institution set up by African writer, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, in a village of the same name in Kenya. You can find more details of it in Ngugi’s classic book, *Decolonising the Mind*.

*Decolonising the Mind* was written by Ngugi wa Thiong’o as his farewell to the English language. Since then, Ngugi has written only in Gikuyu, his mother tongue.

If you cannot locate a copy of *Decolonising the Mind* — which actually pioneers many of the themes that have led to the installation of the Multiworld Network — you can download it from the Multiversity Library website.

Ngugi has been maintaining contact with the Multiworld Network and supports its objectives. And, of course, he is very pleased that the Multiworld Network Newsletter is named after his village in Kenya and the work he did there a long while ago.



Ngugi wa Thiango

Ngugi wa Thiango's website

Good news! Ngugi wa Thiong’o now has his own website. The colourful internet site ([www.ngugiwathiango.com](http://www.ngugiwathiango.com)) provides an overview of his work and thought. Downloadable articles and a complete list of his published books are also available apart from a detailed biography of the Kenyan writer.



Multiversity in Korea

Interest in Multiversity in Korea

The Korean Commission for UNESCO has been entirely supportive of Multiversity work on redesign and non-Eurocentric syllabus. The people at the Commission enabled Claude Alvares to participate in two international meetings where he spoke of the continuing dependencies manifest in the international book trade. Alvares also visited ARENA for a talk, in addition to a lecture at the Ewha Women’s University, where he spoke on Multiversity themes. He broached the idea of temporary text books made by students each year for their courses, so that they could overcome the inertia of textbooks that do not change year after year because they claim to have the properties of Bibles.

Ashis Nandy awarded Fukuoka Grand Prize from Japan



Ashis Nandy

We are delighted to report that Ashis Nandy (who attended both Multiversity meetings at Penang) was recently awarded the five million yen Grand Prize of the Fukuoka Asian Culture Prizes on July 29, 2007.

Nandy remains one of India’s most irreverent social scientists and he was understandably a little alarmed when given the Prize: ‘This is an attempt to make me respectable,’ he confessed to friends and admirers at a reception to felicitate him. ‘But I assure you I won’t succumb to the temptation and will stay as disreputable as I’ve always been.’

The scholar confessed: ‘I decided I wanted to be an intellectual, and not an academic whose primary job is to write for other academics. The world is larger, and an intellectual has the responsibility of responding on social issues and not wait for a post-mortem.’

Multiversity and *Kamiriithu* send him warm felicitations!

Ejected from his University, Ward Churchill starts to teach again from 2nd October



Ward Churchill

Native American thinker and teacher Ward Churchill was fired on false pretexts by the University of Colorado-Boulder in July early this year. The drastic action came after Churchill is reported to have made some comments on 9/11 which the self-appointed patriots of the US did not appreciate. Well, you can’t keep a good man down. The professor is back teaching, this time at the insistence of his students and voluntarily on their request. The new course, ‘ReVisioning American History,’ was launched on the 2nd of October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.

Ward Churchill was always one of the University of Colorado-Boulder’s most popular teachers, but student opinion was entirely disregarded in the Regents’ deci-

sion to fire him for his political statements.

Churchill’s new course ‘is an entirely voluntary exercise for all parties involved. It carries no credits, fulfills no institutional requirements, involves payment of no tuition, entails no paycheck to its instructor . . . The sole purpose of the course is to provide those desiring it a critical and comprehensive alternative to the triumphal narrative upon which the eurosupremacist orthodoxy of scholarship has been constructed, refined, and is currently being (re) imposed with increasing rigidity on campuses across the United States. . . ’ Wow!

Follow him through his website: [www.wardchurchill.net](http://www.wardchurchill.net)

Multiversity in Malaysia

S.M. Mohamed Idris, Chairman of Multiversity, Claude Alvares and Uma Ramaswamy paid a visit to the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) in Kuala Lumpur in connection with curriculum redesign.

They had a meeting with Dr Syed Arabi, Rector of the University, (who had attended the Penang meeting on redesign of social sciences) and some of his colleagues. Dr Arabi says IIUM remains firmly committed to a programme of de-Europeanised studies and observed that several IIUM courses already reflect this concern.

Multiversity in China



Claude Alvares presenting a set of Multiversity books to his hosts after a presentation at the People’s University at Beijing, China. At extreme right is Sun Liang who not only arranged the lecture but also did a superb translation.

## Students Islamic Organisation organises education caravans



SIO education meetings are preceded by public rallies which take the issue of colonial education to the public



SIO students courting arrest in Kerala during a demo

During the month of November 2007, the Students Islamic Organization (SIO) launched three caravans from different parts of India carrying the message of making education more meaningful on the occasion of their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The three caravans, with messages, were flagged off from Thiruvananthapuram in the south of India, Kolkata in the east and New Delhi between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2007. These caravans converged at Mumbai on November 25 where a national level conference was held. Claude Alvares addressed the Mumbai final meeting, together with Sandeep Pandey and others.

The entire program was conducted under the central theme of 'Redefining Education – Regaining Struggle-Renovating Society: SIO Awakening the Nation.'

SIO's Public Relations Secretary K. Suhail informed the media that all their programmes would address the basic limitations of the contemporary educational system, the commercialization of education and other pressing educational issues in different states, the growing unconcerned attitude towards society in the youth community and reiterate the need to renovate society by changing the educational system. As a prelude to launching the three National Caravans, a series of activities including seminars, symposiums, colloquiums, cycle rallies, public meetings and conventions

were organised in all the states. *The caravans covered as many as 55 universities, addressed 70 conferences, 200 student rallies, 20 seminars and hundreds of public reception programs. Street plays, documentary screening and flash presentations were also a part of the caravans.*

'Today we have an educational system which doesn't have any space for morality in its curriculum,' said All India president of SIO, Bishrudin Sharqi. This conviction was amplified at the inauguration of the programme at Thiruvananthapuram, by Sheikh Muhammed Karakkunnu, when he observed: 'Today the educational system creates a new generation which does slavery for the colonial powers which conduct festivals for them. This has become our culture today.'

'The fundamental flaw of the existing educational system is that it is only producing knowledge workers that are committed to their corporate gods. The need of the hour is to redefine education and its philosophical base,' said Mr. Bishrudin Sharqi while he was addressing the Students' Conference at Hamdard University. Students are not mere consumers but leaders of tomorrow and they should play their role to establish a society based not only on justice and equity but also on righteousness, he added. He strongly condemned the conspiracy to depoliticize the student community and the rising trend of ultra self-centrism among students and youth.

In a symposium on the 'Challenges to the Nation and Students' Agenda,' leaders of different student organizations and movements expressed their grave concern over the corporatisation of education. They were apprehensive that, 'If this trend is allowed to continue, education will become a distant dream for common man.' They also expressed their disquiet about different challenges like communalism, human rights violations and degradation of moral values.

Explaining the objectives of the conference, Mr. Adnan Yousuf, State President, SIO Delhi, told his audience there that the SIO believes in fundamental aims and the purpose of education is to create real human beings but unfortunately, the existing system is unable to fulfill this prime objective of education. As a result, the worldly life and its material pleasures have become an end in itself, which leads to the ideology of self-centrism.

Prof. Mohd. Rafat, Patron, SIO Delhi, while presiding over the symposium observed that it is the responsibility of the student community to strive for evil-free campuses and to create an environment where people could come forward to raise their voice against injustice, violation of rights and inequality.

Get more details from the SIO website which is updated quite frequently: [www.sio-india.org](http://www.sio-india.org).

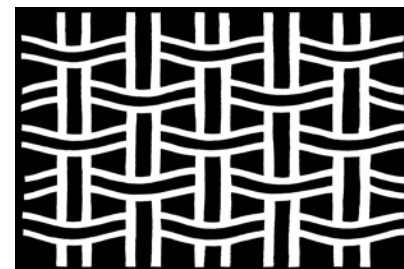
### Education

By Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi  
(free from [www.multiversitylibrary.com](http://www.multiversitylibrary.com))

Maudidi made this deadly speech in the mid-1930s at a graduation ceremony at an Islamic college:

'Dear students! You have spent many years of your life at this institution to acquire education. You have eagerly been waiting for the day when you will reap the harvest of your labour in the form of a degree. I am aware of your emotions on this occasion, and that is why it pains me to express my thoughts so bluntly. Frankly speaking, I consider this Alma Mater, in fact all Alma Maters of this kind, slaughter houses rather than educational institutions. The degrees to be awarded are in fact death certificates, issued when the murderer is satisfied that he has accomplished his task; fortunate are those who escape from this organised butchery with still some spark of life. I have not come here to congratulate you on receiving these death certificates. I am, rather, overwhelmed with grief to see you in such a miserable plight. I am like someone seeking a person who might still be alive among a mass of corpses.'

# Taleemnet



## 'Learning' Around Asia & the Middle East



Participants during a session of the Learning Societies Conference in Teheran, September 2007

Alternative education is alive and kicking. It has remained a steady obsession among people ever since Rabindranath Tagore (India's Nobel Laureate for Literature) walked out of school because the institution was crippling his artistic sensibilities.

But the experience of people in India has found echoes in other parts of the world: sensitive people everywhere are asking whether the school has outlived its purpose (if it had any). The institution today is found to have strayed far from its initial purposes: the art of bringing up children as socially responsible individuals and nursing their learning capacities at the same time. Schools dumb down children so persistently and with such delight that we may have reached a point where serious educators are bound to ask whether children should actually be banned from entering the institution in their own interest.

In India, every year, at least two major meetings take place on alternative education. This year, the first of the meetings was held in Mysore. It was organised by the Asha Foundation. A report on this meeting can be found elsewhere in these pages. By the time this issue of K is out, another meeting of the Learning Network will have taken place in Bangalore, at the lovely institution for child learning that Jane Sahi started and has run so remarkably well for so many years.

K will report on that as well in our next issue.

We are also carrying this time an interesting lecture by L.S. Saraswathi, who has important observations on how children learn which appear sometimes obvious, sometimes unusual, but which no educator worth his or her salt would ignore at their own peril.

In September this year, the Learning Societies group met in Teheran, largely to bring the Iranians into the framework of the open learning discussions. Representatives of Shikshantar, Multiversity, and outstandingly innovative individuals like K.B. Jinan attended the meeting which was held for a few days in Teheran city and a few days in a lovely location outside.

A lot of work has gone into the LS conferences. Information about this group and its activities and meetings can be found at the Shikshantar website. Of all the groups, Shikshantar has been one of the prime movers of these discussions, hosting the first one in Udaipur. The Udaipur discussions are now available as a remarkable small film which any person interested in how the present schooling system works and the discussions of people would enjoy. Write to (or email) Shikshantar for a copy. The movie was made by Abhivyakti which is also part of the alternative schooling network.

One offshoot of the LS conferences was the projects it spawned with small grants assistance from UNESCO. Two of these came to Multiversity which organised a meeting in Goa in 2005 and also a book on 'vernacular educators', largely of people who work in alternative education in different regional languages. This literature can be called from Other India Bookstore. Both books can also be downloaded free of cost from [www.multiversitylibrary.com](http://www.multiversitylibrary.com) which also has a number of other free downloads of books on alternative education.

As you can well see, alternative schools are as busy as ever, with perhaps greater focus of educators on what they have achieved in comparison with formal or mainstream institutions. The most impressive feature of these institutions is they also look after the 'humanity' aspect of the children who learn in their premises. This is completely missing now in state-sponsored, commercialised, regular schooling. That is why modern schools end up generating students with no soul or character and why educated people are turning out to be the most selfish and violent people now living on the planet. After all, you do need schooling to unleash a war like the one against the people of Iraq or atomic bombs over Japan.

## The Hundred Languages of Children

The child has  
A hundred languages,  
A hundred hands,  
A hundred thoughts,  
A hundred ways of thinking,  
Of playing, of speaking.

A hundred — always a  
hundred —  
Ways of listening,  
Of marvelling, of loving.

A hundred joys  
For singing and  
understanding,  
A hundred worlds to  
discover,  
A hundred worlds to invent,  
A hundred worlds to dream,

The child has  
A hundred languages  
(and a hundred hundred  
more)  
But they steal ninety-nine  
The school and the culture.  
Separate the head from the  
body.

They tell the child  
To think without hands,  
To do without head,  
To listen and not to speak,  
To understand without joy,  
They tell the child that  
Work and play,  
Reading and fantasy,  
Science and imagination,  
Sky and earth,  
Reason and dream,  
Are thing that do not belong  
together,  
And thus they tell the child  
that  
The hundred is not there.  
The child says,  
No way!  
The hundred is there!

**Lovis Malaguzzi**  
Founder Educator  
Reggio Emilia Pre-School

## L S Saraswathi on Learning

*Dr. L S Saraswathi is no stranger to Taleemnet readers. An educator of great repute, she gained unique insights into learning processes from decades of observing children during her work with rural education programmes for women.*

*This article captures her insights on the primary process of learning in children and is part of a longer lecture delivered by her recently on the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup>. Samanvaya Freedom Lecture in Chennai*

### Lets us look at learning:

Learning is something that happens through out our lives. Every moment, in our interaction with our surroundings, each one of us is gaining experience. These experiences shape our thoughts, inherent qualities and make us what we are. Knowledge shapes us. This is learning.

Look at a child. The process is so clear and obvious in her/him. Children are intrinsically enthusiastic creatures and natural explorers. More importantly they have certain awe and wonder about everything that they discover. They are all the time moving around, disturbing and experimenting with things around them, *and they learn by themselves*. These are qualities that they are born with. We can only make sure that we do not hinder this natural process of learning and interfere, if at all, as little as possible to facilitate it.

### One can learn by observing children:

All their different activities of supposed 'disturbance' and their experiments are their personal experiences that will go into shaping their personalities. With small children, many a times, with all good intentions, adults stop them from doing certain things or curtailing their natural urge to explore, failing to recognize that this is the way a child learns about materials around him/her first-hand; their properties, textures, colour, shape, smell and possible uses. What we fail to understand is how much learning we have stopped with our good intentions.

Some things that we observe children doing may to us seem a waste of time!

*A list of few things that one may observe children engaged in are:*

- give her a piece of coal and s/he will keep rubbing it on the wall, or floor, maybe other surfaces for a very long time without any indication on boredom;

- s/he will gather sand from one place with both her hands and drop it in another place in order to pile it there;

- s/he will continuously bang a plate/ vessel with another object like a spoon or stick;

- s/he will repeatedly keep sifting and sieving sand, mud, grain, seeds through gaps between fingers;

- break sticks or anything that is breakable;

- try to bend objects;

- follow or try to catch ants creeping on the floor or walls;



Dr Saraswathi

- bite into objects

- deliberately drop down or throw objects;

- try lifting very heavy objects that s/he may not be able to lift and/or has been instructed not to.

*Whatever children learn is continuously being used by them, and this is how learning is fixed, to then occur naturally. Whatever is learnt manifests automatically.*

### How does this learning manifest?

At the first level, children indulge in imitative play, just imitating sounds, people, gestures ... without comprehending the meaning, consequence or rationale. Next step is make-believe play, where children use metaphors and give their own meanings to activities and objects. For instance, the chair may become a scooter in their play. This is followed by the social dramas in which they start enacting people and situations with meaning.

### In this process, how do aids come in?

In the beginning, they may use material to make things with their hands, like playing with lumps of clay. Then comes drawing and painting. Only after this would they even begin to comprehend symbols

ascribed to alphabets, numbers, etc. But we adults dismiss much of what the child learns before symbols as play and many times bypass this learning and push children into these symbols which are several steps above the preliminary natural stages of learning.

In my interactions with children, especially in the rural areas, I have seen much creative improvisations by children some of whom may not even have attended school. I have seen many beautiful clay models of cows, bullock carts, rice mills made with intricately placed and imaginatively used handy materials.

### Now how is this creation possible without observation? Children observe. How much of this do we actually try to capitalise on and cultivate in our education process?

The one major factor is: what do the people around children think is learning? Studying textbooks and writing exams has become learning today. But this has no effect on anybody's real learning and achievements. If we really want to teach our next generations, then we must stop being obstacles to their learning, we must not stop them from exploring, we must ensure the freedom of environment that is required for that learning not to be disturbed. What we have to understand more importantly is that whatever is around is learning material!

*(Special thanks to Priya Nagesh of Samanvaya for translation from Tamil to English.)*

## Learning the Heart Way!

By Samyuktha

Samyuktha's live-wire book, *Learning the Heart Way*, may dramatically alter the way young people think about college or university education in future.

Most youngsters would like to be free of the drudgery and boredom associated with college lectures, mouldy professors, sterile guides and endless examinations. Coming from an ordinary middle-class environment in Andhra, Samyuktha decided to opt out of the 'rat race of learning': the endless tests and scores; the straitjacket imposed by college disciplines which actually narrowed down the world of learning to mugging badly written texts of history, political science, economics, psychology, and yes, sociology; the endless chase after MBA degrees. Instead, she created her own 'higher education' curriculum, one that suited both her heart and mind. The result is a marvellous book on learning 'as if the heart mattered'.

Other India Press and Multiversity are delighted to be associated with a publication that will be a source of inspiration and direction to many young people (and their parents) in these days of soulless education and heartless learning. Order from OIB, Goa.

### Shikshantar's Nai Talim Film Festival

Over the years of its work, Shikshantar has been assembling a wonderful collection of films that deal with alternative education. Last year, it made the set of films available to people all over the world for organising decentralised film festivals everywhere.

This year, the list has grown to 35 films! Shikshantar requests a small donation of Rs.750 per each set of films which can be ordered by those who wish to show them in their schools or at education meetings or wherever. (The Rs.750 charge is solely for CDs, duplication costs and for courier/postage.)

Get your set of the series today.

Write to or contact: Shikshantar, 83 Adinath Nagar, Udaipur, 313004, Rajasthan or email: shikshantar@yahoo.com

# A College for the Gaps?

The Gap Year College was recently started by SIDH in Mussoorie as part of its programmes to offer young people to get a chance to move in the direction of their dreams.

In most countries abroad, most students move out after the long years of high school and take a chance to breathe freely and look around at the world. Academic studies are put aside. Most normal people will want a break from them.

The break, and the opportunity to walk a different, experienced-based learning path, ensure that the alienation from life that the student is forced to undergo over ten years of schooling, is overcome.

The year-long programme is a co-educational and residential program for youth. It is structured around a non-religious, rational understanding of life.

The course provides opportunities to hone a wide range of functional competencies: verbal, logical, kinesthetic, and interpersonal.

Courses on philosophy, ontology, lateral thinking, cultural studies, literature, language, music, and arts are part of the study, which also includes classroom sessions, dialogues, readings and films, hands-on training, fieldwork, seminars, interactions, exposure trips, and personal exploration.

Those who participate have access to a very wide range of prominent mentoring personalities from across the nation (*see programme collage below*).

The full course is a preparation for excellence in almost any field of human endeavour.

### For whom is the Gap Year College designed?

Students who have passed Class X or XII or higher. Young students (aged 18 and above) who are interested in self-exploration.

### When is the College held?

It will now take place every year, commencing in July. In the first year, six youngsters between the age of 18-24 have enrolled in the College.

Vinish Gupta, who heads the programme, says that the vast interest that has been generated by the College will perhaps translate into more enrollments after the benefits of the course are visible at the end of the first year.

The workshops have been a big success. The real challenge according to Gupta lies in living and learning together.

Those interested in joining for the 2008 course commencing in July should get in touch with SIDH. (SIDH is a sister organization of Multiversity and shares similar goals.)

# Sanctuary for learning naturally



Gurukulam (heavenly) Botanical Sanctuary at Wynad

### Multiversity would like to introduce you to some outstanding nature study courses conducted by the Gurukulam Botanical Sanctuary at Wynad.

(I visited the place a few years ago and was amazed at what Suprabha Seshan and her colleagues have accomplished here in protecting forests and raising a huge nursery of priceless orchids of all kinds – CA.)

GBS’s “Landscapes & Lifeskills: From the Western Ghats to the High Himalaya” was conducted from December 2006 - April 2007

A central concern of the Landscapes and Lifeskills Course is to enable people, mostly youngsters, to re-discover the deeper connection with the living world, wild and human, while acquiring knowledge and skills that can help us understand nature and act sensibly with it.

The course was built on a series of interlocking units about the processes, organisms and influences within a landscape, including the relationships between people and their environments.

The course was facilitated by the Gurukulam Botanical Sanctuary (Wynad, Kerala), and Malika Virdi (Himal Prakriti- Munsiri, Himalaya). In their different places, climates and cultures, both parties’ central concern is the complex web of connections between individuals, their communities and their landscapes.

The course takes an experiential, textbook-free approach to learning. Classes are conducted in the field via a series of questions and exercises that allow students to develop knowledge and skills from experience.

Each of us relates to the natural world through our senses and bodies. For this reason it is important to develop one’s physical self as a tool for scientific inquiry, along with specific skills in natural history and environmental science. Students learn through such courses to cultivate sense awareness (how to look and listen to the natural world), and improve their strength, flexibility, and agility. The goal is to establish a deeper relationship with the living world and sharpen our aptitude to care for it. We aim to help students become all-round naturalists capable of ‘reading’ the natural world, understanding what you see, forming questions of interest, and communicating your discoveries.

The course is generally intended for young persons who are interested in the natural world. It requires:

- An open spirit;
- A capacity for self-inquiry;
- A willingness to be challenged physically, psychologically, and intellectually;
- An ability to cooperate with a diverse group of people;
- The stamina to live for long periods in simple conditions;
- Fluency in English.



Students who come to learn, end up caring

## Programmes in the Gap Year College

- » **Wealth from Waste**
- » **Understanding Gandhi**  
a workshop to explore, evaluate & understand Gandhi’s relevance in the contemporary world at Anasakti Ashram, Kausani, Almota  
7th September to 2nd October 2007
- » **Creative Writing**  
Facilitated by Prema Raghunath
- » **Understanding the Medium of Film**  
Facilitated by Ankit Pogula
- » **Soil, Soul & Society**  
A workshop by Satish Kumar

# The Sumavanam Village School

T.M. Narasimhan and Usha, a husband-wife couple, co-founded Sumavanam School in 1982. It is located near a town called Madanapalle in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. The place is surrounded by hills and has about 10 villages around it. The school is meant for the children of the economically weaker sections of these villages.

Usha and Narasimhan both once worked with David Horsburgh, the well-known innovative educationist. Narasimhan is an alumnus of IIT Kanpur and was a scientist at National Aeronautical Laboratory, Bangalore, Karnataka. Tired of working for the privileged, he quit and joined David Horsburgh's Neel Bagh rural school where as a bonus he met Usha, then a teacher at Neel Bagh, who became his life partner. Both of them taught at Neel Bagh and other rural centres for some time before they decided to set up Sumavanam.

The school at present has 20 children in the age group 6 to 15 years. They belong to families of marginal farmers with an average monthly income of about Rs.1500. Children are split into three groups based on their abilities. A 12' x 20' room functions as a schoolroom. All children use the single schoolroom to work. Each child has an individual desk and all sit on the floor. As all the children are in the same classroom, the older children are able to help the younger ones.

The medium of instruction is English. The school educates till the tenth grade and thereafter helps pupils, who so desire, to pursue their graduation at the local college. Some of them continue their education through correspondence courses. Two of the alumni are helping as teachers now. Usha and Narasimhan continue to remain the main teachers at Sumavanam.

The school starts at 8 a.m. Children spend an hour cleaning the classrooms and their surroundings. Assembly is a formal and solemn affair accompanied by singing. It helps in turning the focus on academics and calms the mind. The children assemble, stand in lines, and sing local folk songs and other value based songs in different languages. Assembly is followed by a Maths class.

Then there is a 30-minute break during which they are served something to eat. Although village children are very hardy, life in the village is difficult. 'Several years ago I remember an instance where the child passed

out during assembly. He was very reluctant to tell what was wrong and after a long period of quizzing revealed that there was no food in the house and he had not had anything to eat,' reminisces Narasimhan.

After the break, children study English for an hour followed by crafts session. Children do plenty of craftwork like collage, paper folding, needlework, clay work and various types of paintings. The older children learn carpentry and have sculpted toys, puzzles, boxes and made doors and windows. Then comes a one hour lunch break.

In the afternoon a science/social studies class follows a Telugu class. It is then play time for an hour followed by self-study and completion of assignments before leaving for

prepared. This is something Usha and Narasimhan insist on, because it hones the teacher's skills and the teacher is involved in the whole exercise. The children too feel motivated and special to see that their teachers have made them special worksheets. The teachers are always asked / encouraged to prepare their own teaching materials whenever they can, to keep their experience fresh and their own learning alive. Sumavanam makes use of a lot of learning material that has been developed over the years.

The students then move on to books. The child first reads with the teacher, next reads the book on his/her own, followed by working on exercises in comprehension. Sumavanam uses progressively graded textbooks and

In the first 5 years of schooling pupils use books published by Oxford, Macmillan and the books designed at Sumavanam. On completion of five years in school, in the sixth and seventh year government-prescribed textbooks are introduced and children are helped to prepare for the class seven examinations and later on for the class ten examinations. 'Though we follow these books, the topics are handled as we think they should be done. There are now several audio visual aids, CDs, microscopes, scientific instruments etc., that are used as complementary learning aids,' explains Narasimhan.

In mathematics, work sheets have been designed to introduce numerals, idea of greater than, less than, additions, subtractions, fractions, decimals, etc. There are also workbooks designed to teach preschool children. It is quite interesting to observe the number of different ways children use a simple ruler to solve problems.

The use of these skills and materials has shown direct results in the pupils. Newly admitted children have learnt alphabets, *matras* and stressed consonants very easily, and, in a year, are able to comprehend text and story books meant for third graders. Pre-school children (three to five years old) are able to tell stories and sing rhymes with great confidence. The five to ten years olds are able to form words relevant to a lesson, write confidently on the blackboard, correct incorrectly written words, write stories with illustrations and explain two digit additions using the Abacus etc. It is interesting to watch the children read a lesson on their own, read it to others and do the exercises on their own at their own pace.

There is a special emphasis on art, which is taken as a very serious activity of the curriculum. Art leads children to explore their creativity and brings self-discipline as a bonus. The art classes are so looked forward to that they continue past the allotted time. A child's attention span is greatly increased by these activities. Creating a delicate painting using leaves is an activity that develops and encourages tremendous concentration and skill.

Children are taken out on school excursions once in six months. They are taken to the big cities regularly to visit museums, planetariums, national parks and other places of academic and cultural interests.



Paper machier work done by Sumavanam children

home at 6 o'clock. Some of the older children i.e the senior students of 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades stay back for an additional two to three hours to work on their assignments or to do night study.

For the first few months all newcomers start with oral work, familiarizing with listening, speaking, and memorizing. This is done through story telling, use of flashcards and several language games that Usha has developed over the years.

David Horsburgh encouraged his teachers to make their own simple learning-teaching aids based on needs and requirements. Materials and methods have been developed to bring about clarity in concepts and to make learning of languages and mathematics interesting. The teacher handling the class prepares the worksheets for different groups of children. Children are encouraged to talk a lot and tell stories. This way, in the span of a few months it is possible to identify each child's learning ability and strength. Based on these insights workbooks are introduced.

For every class, fresh worksheets with new images and new ideas are

workbooks for different subjects. Sumavanam has developed methods by which children can learn alphabets without the drudgery of 'writing over' letters on the slate for hours. These workbooks based on different levels of ability are of immense value in catering to the needs of children. Unlike regular mainstream textbooks where answers can be very easily found in the text, the lessons prepared by us are such that, the child has to comprehend the subject in order to answer questions.

Once the child gets into textbook mode, English and Tamil are taught. Teaching of English is introduced through Phonetics. They then move on to books with groups of words for all the alphabets. Children are now able to make their own words and also use these words in sentences. It is amazing how these children in a span of 2 to 3 months are able to make sentences, read small story books, arrange a set of given sentences in a particular order and answer questions dealing with comprehension.

Some of the children help the visiting doctor in dispensing medication to patients who come for treatment from the neighbouring villages.

This school does not encourage competition among children but lays stress on self-learning and co-operation in learning. David Horsburgh used to cite the example of two children: one tall and one short. Can one say that because one is tall he is intelligent and because the other is short he is not? These are individual, disconnected traits and comparison is futile. Very much like trying to compare apples and oranges.

Sumavanam has no standard wise divisions, no exams, no rewards and prizes except the state board exam at 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Students are not graded until they are ready to enter Class Six level. For instance, a child who is very good in mathematics may have completed Book Five, but may still be working with Book Two in English. Once they complete Book Six in all subjects, they are considered ready for Class Six.

How does Sumavanam evaluate learning achievements, considering that there are no written or oral tests? Usha explains: "Many times, children don't even realize that their learning is being assessed. While the children are using tools like picture cards I observe them, and see if they are making mistakes. When I give them exercises, I sit with each child, explain the mistakes they have made and correct them. They then prepare a 'fair copy' of the same exercise without copying from the previous draft. On examining this output, I know if the child has understood the mistakes, corrected him/herself and learnt from them. They are also given worksheets after every lesson.

Children do not write exams till Class VI. Thereafter, they write exams more as a preparation for the Board Examination rather than as an exercise in grading and assessment. The students write their

Standard X examination conducted by the State Board. The parents have expectations from the school and from their children and they want that the schooling process results in a certification from the qualifying authority.

Though there are no exams, children have shown consistent perseverance in completing the tasks assigned to them despite coming from very poor families with very little food, basic clothing and little encouragement at home. However we realize that the freedom of thinking and independent enquiry that is slowly built over the initial years gradually diminishes over time as focus over examinations begins to overrule their learning.

On the whole children use no bad language, have very few fights among themselves, are punctual, and care for things. Most of the school materials like scissors, needles, brushes, paints, pencils, etc., are left in the care of the children. Nothing has been lost. Children rarely tell lies. They do not copy answers from others. They have helped in keeping their surroundings clean and as a rule do not kill snakes or other animals but catch them and release them into the neighbouring forest. The area is otherwise very dry, however the school premises are green, all because pupils over the years have painstakingly planted and nurtured the surrounding greenery.

The responsibility of a village school doesn't end with just imparting education. It plays an enormous role in the child's personal life too. Once village children are familiar with their teacher they will confide their personal details and concerns. It is rare that a teacher-student relationship in small villages doesn't grow into a friendship of mutual respect. Sumavanam children have grown up to be good and responsible members of the village community. Some have completed their college study.



A language class at Sumavanam: mixed age groups

One of the students today looks after his mother, takes care of his brother's family, maintains the village accounts for a community programme and teaches at the school. Such people are respected in the village and become role models for the younger children who now want to be in the same school that made this boy, the person he is today.

Horsburgh insisted on three points:

1) In nature, you never find species (animals or plants) segregated by age. The young and the old all grow and learn together. He would always ask us, 'why then segregate children by age in the school?'

2) It is very important for the teachers to constantly remind themselves that they are merely facilitators of the children's learning process and hence there is no hierarchical distinction between students and teachers. At the school all of us sit together on the floor.

3) We always follow a child's pace of learning and go accordingly, and never use a standard textbook for an entire group of children or expect them to all learn at the same pace.

To the Horsburgh principles we have added a few of our own precepts, which are as follows:

4) Most children who come to our school are craving for love and at-

tention. Our first task therefore is to make sure that the teacher is kind to them, and speaks to them with concern. Only when we have established a relationship of mutual affection do lessons and learning follow. When the atmosphere in the school is friendly, the process of enquiry begins and this is the first step to learning.

5) Children can learn even under very adverse conditions. There appears to be an in built desire to learn, but to do so, one requires an atmosphere free from fear. It is therefore necessary that there be a friendly relationship between the teacher and pupils, allowing each child to learn at his/her own pace.

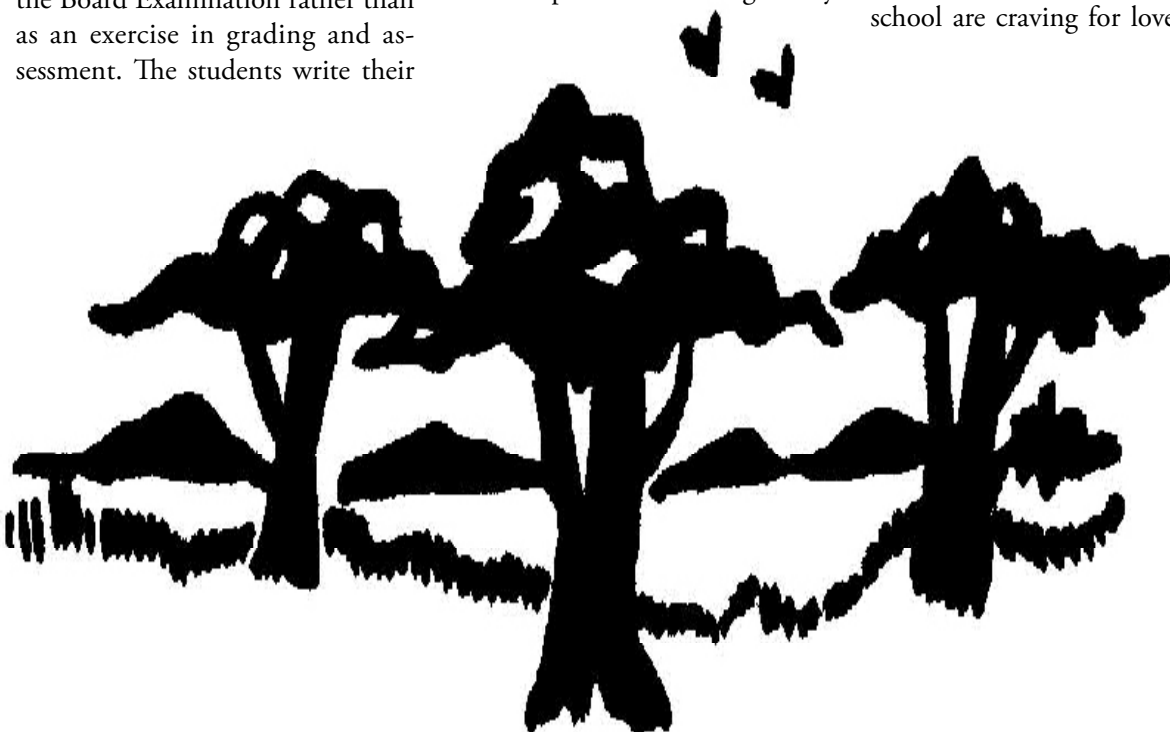
6) It is incorrect to punish slow learners, as it is 'their' learning pace. Comparison and punishment will only make children stay away from school. It is plain ignorance to think that in order to excel one needs to compare and compete with others. Children have performed wonderfully well in non-competitive environments.

7) Rote learning is a form of violence. Teaching a set of rules is not only an insult to children's intelligence but also a form of violence. Only when children learn intelligently can there be scope for intuition to play its part.

8) If the teacher must know the level of each child in class, it follows that the student teacher ratio must be small.

9) Children love stories, singing and play and most concepts can easily be taught through them.

10) Children have abundant energy and they enjoy working with their hands. Introducing them to handicrafts can satiate this energy and also help develop concentration and quietness of the mind. Not only will they develop their sensitivity but they will also have the satisfaction and pride of enjoying their creations, apart from enabling them to experiment, explore and give expression to their feelings.



# The Learning Network Meets

5<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference of The Learning Network, July 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>, at Deena Bandhu Ashram School, Chamarajanagara, Karnataka.

A vibrant mix of around 120 educators, representing 35-40 groups/organizations from across the country descended on the sleepy town of Chamarajanagar at the foot hills of the Western Ghat range of mountains near the princely state city of Mysore in Karnataka for a three day national conference in late July.

Each day was packed with presentations, workshops, slide shows, documentaries etc that followed a pattern of parallel sessions. Four halls dedicated to exhibitions showcased books, learning aids, tools, lab equipments, posters, craft exhibits etc.

One was introduced to a varied fare of innovative teaching experiments. Sanctuary Schools in the tribal areas on the periphery of protected areas in Andhra Pradesh teach basic literacy with emphasis on forest related issues. The VGK Kendra at BR Hills in Karnataka uses a curriculum that has been designed based on biodiversity and local conservation issues. Pacha Shaale of Deccan Development Society, Hyderabad is a school for farmers children and incorporates farm related activities, artisan training, traditional farm related cultural events in their curriculum. Kaliyuva Mane an interesting alternative school near Mysore run to a large extent by student volunteers from surrounding professional colleges lays emphasis on emotional stability as a prerequisite for good

learning. A couple from Gujarat, Ashok Bhargava and Dr.Lata Shah have experimented with teaching village children on the basis of a child's naturally innate learning process. Ravi Aluganti works on a free lance basis with school children in Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh and runs a mobile circulating library for children.

It received significant supportive participation from local residents exuding a sense of pride in hosting a National Conference. Every evening the local folk artists and children of



Demos galore at the Network Conference

the Ashram entertained the delegates with performances.

You can register on their website: [www.learningnet-india.org](http://www.learningnet-india.org) if you would like to be part of the alternative and current parallel education processes that are emerging in the country. Details and profiles of delegates along with minutes of each session are posted on their site. Each year a magazine "Revive" is published by the network. You can request them for a copy or read it online and also place a request to be put on their mailing list for "Chiguru" their news letter.



Scene from the Learning Network Conference

# SIDH Meet on Education

The beautiful hills of the Himalayas in Kempty village in Uttarakhand (Uttarkhand) served as backdrop to a major conference organised by SIDH on education, modernity and development. The conference, which was held in June 2007, was attended by a veritable galaxy of educational thinkers, intellectuals, students, educators, teachers, researchers, novelists, journalists and social activists.

Myths about much clichéd terms of modernity and development that have overtaken the present outlook on education were through this meeting put firmly in their place of inconsequence when juxtaposed against the collective wisdom that has kept the human race sane all these past centuries.

Sessions covered topics through panel discussions including addressing gaps in Mainstream Education and the nature of Colonial Education.

The entire report may be read on the taleemnet website.

Education, said Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche who graced the inaugural, "cannot be based in assumptions, estimations, news or information, for such education makes the mind narrow and straitjacketed. It has to be about vidya, about truth."

According to Prof. Krishna Kumar, who also attended, "most of the conflicts related to education can be traced back to the colonial period, and the gap between state and society which never really became a concern of education. The main problem is that we do not wish to engage with the state. We cannot ignore the state because it is the biggest advocate of the current model of development."

The [www.sidhsri.org](http://www.sidhsri.org) website is presently under reconstruction.

When the site is operational, please visit. It carries all the relevant papers of the conference and several other interesting material for those interested in salvaging kids from today's conventional slaughterhouses.

## Annual Alternative Education Network Meet

The annual three day meeting of the *alternative education network* was held from 21- 24 November 2007 at Sita School in Bangalore. This was the first network in India, started about 15 years ago by a small group of educators mostly from southern India to explore and share their individual understandings of education. The network publishes its discussions in booklet form. Copies of past issues may be ordered from Ramdas B of Vidyodaya School, Gudalur, Tamil Nadu. We hope to carry a report on the November meeting in the next issue of *Kamirithu*.

## Danger! School! back in print



Out of print for some time, the classic illustrated cartoon book that pillories the foibles and stupidities of the schooling system is back in circulation. This time publishers are Earthcare Books and Other India Press. Order your copies now from either Earthcare or OIP at the price of Rs.150.

## Sane Voices from Asia

'*The Asian Future - Dialogues for Change*' in 2 volumes, is edited by Pracha Hutunuwatr and Ramu Manivannan and introduced by the Dalai Lama. The volumes (published by Zed Books, London) come as a long awaited relief to the bewildering intellectual landscape of Asia. They contain exhaustive dialogues with fourteen Asian thinkers who have dared to cut new grounds amidst the cacophony of Eurocentric intellectual discourses. The impact of these dialogues is nothing short of revolutionary. *The Asian Future* provides an alternative vision and a creative longing of an Asian soul. It is a book of practice, of doing things with harmony with all forms of Life.

The fourteen thinkers interviewed at length are Ashis Nandy, Sulak Sivaraksa, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Tu Weiming, Mahamoud Ayoub, Bishop Julio Xavier Labayen, Abdurraman Wahid, Walden Bello, Vandana Shiva, Chandra Muzaffar, Arief Budiman, Satish Kumar, Nakamura Hisashi and the Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche.

The dialogical volumes define an Asian model of development and boldly outline the broad features of

Asian identity. They fathom the inner depths of Asian minds, celebrate reverence for life and provide sane and compelling critiques of Eurocentric knowledge.

The thinkers have spoken elaborately upon the issues of the currently popular developmental model, globalization and poverty, the pain and suffering of the ordinary masses, ideas of governance, education, democracy, deep ecology, plural vision, inter religious harmony, organic farming, ills of consumerism, meaningless hedonism of the western culture, peace, non-violence, green politics and many more life-enhancing and threatening concerns.

One gets the feeling that Asia truly holds the key to humanity's future if the Asians themselves finally realize that they are an autonomous intellectual system, not beholden to intellectual influence located out side Asia.

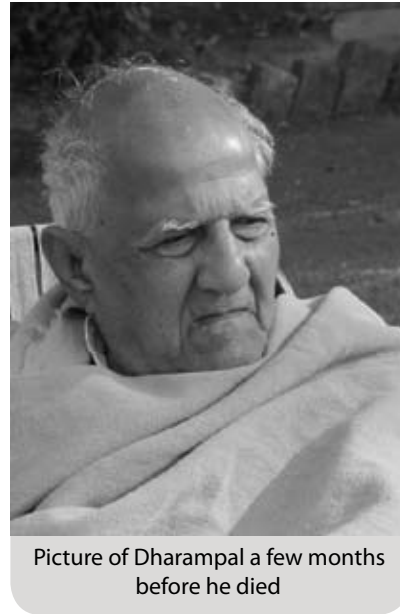
Pracha Hutunuwatr and Ramu Manivannan deserves special praise for their meticulously framed questions and insightful contribution as the dialogues progress.

*Review by Vishram Gupta*

## Dharampal Set Available

***The Collected Writings of Dharampal in 5 volumes have been re-printed by the Other India Press (in association with SIDH).***

The volumes were released by Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche (Prime Minister of the Government of



Picture of Dharampal a few months before he died

Tibet-in-Exile) at a well-attended function at New Delhi on the 23rd October 2007.

This set of five volumes is available from Other India Bookstore ([www.otherindia bookstore.com](http://www.otherindia bookstore.com)) or SIDH at a cost of Rs.900.

One of the most important volumes in the set is *The Beautiful Tree*, a book that upset several theories about schooling in India prior to the arrival of the British. *Indian Science and Technology in the Eighteenth Century*, another one of the volumes, compelled historians to rewrite their histories of science and technology in India.

Also released on the occasion by Prof. Rinpoche was a new book on Dharampal, *Remembering Dharampal* (an exclusive SIDH publication). The book comprises reminiscences of Dharampal written by several of his colleagues and friends. The articles shed light on different aspects of his personality and work.

Paradoxically, interest in Dharampal's work has zoomed after his departure from the planet in October 2006. From the record, the largest downloads from [www.multiversitylibrary.com](http://www.multiversitylibrary.com) are of his books.

More information on Dharampal can be accessed at [www.dharampal.net](http://www.dharampal.net) (a site maintained by Ram Subramaniam).

## ASIA - Magazine of Asian Literature

(Volume I, No. 1 Summer 2006)

ASIA is a new quarterly magazine of Asian Literature published in a bilingual (English, Korean) edition from Korea. According to its publishers, it "aspires to be a forest of various creative minds. Asia does not mean a specific geographic region. We do not aim for an aesthetic self-governance. We do not propose a cultural separatist movement. We simply want to look at ourselves with our own eyes." The journal will enable writers from Asian countries to exchange viewpoints on literature, art and society and share Asian values with citizens of the world.

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## New Book on Alternative Schooling

Sage has just published a new book of great interest to our readers. *Alternative Schooling in India* is edited by Sarojini Vittachi, Neeraja Raghavan and Kiran Raj. The price of the volume is Rs.360 and it can be ordered from [www.sagepub.in](http://www.sagepub.in) or any bookstore.

It's a good sign that a reputed academic publisher has brought out a book on alternative schooling. This can only mean that alternative schools are being noticed and

contrasted with conventional humdrum schools.

The book contains research data on alternative schools functioning within the country in which efforts are being made to move away from traditional and mainstream learning practice. It also includes exclusive articles by leading practitioners in the field. The book focusses on those schools that make the learning process fun for the teacher as well as for the taught, in contrast to the whirl of examination-oriented learning in mainstream schools.

*Alternative Schooling in India* contains a directory of alternative schools in India, including many schools that are tucked away in remote corners of the country. Interestingly, the common thread binding these 'alternative schools' is concern for the welfare of the child by teachers who see their work as much more than just a job.



# ‘Lessons from the Soil!’

Sangeetha Sriram

On reflection, I have spent most of my life answering a question that most adults pose casually to children, ‘What do you want to become when you grow up?’ As a young girl, I fancied becoming a bus conductor blowing the whistle, or a gardener getting all dirty.

But, school had a different plan for me, and for endless years I kept to a routine of uniforms, homework, exams, pin-drop silence, memorizing reams of text... All else was seen as distraction.

Life and its rules constantly perplexed me. To wonder, wander, do the things one enjoyed, I was told, would come in the way of ‘a successful life’, which was all about work, money, power and fame. Emerging a topper had to be the non-negotiable goal. My million life-questions were silenced by an unconditional trust placed on elders who had my best interest at heart.

My conditioning (from school, home and all around) soon pushed me into chasing careers that would make me rich and famous. After my school years, I got busy with becoming, first, a *fashion designer* and then, a *commercial artist*. But my exposure to the myriad social issues forced me to reject them for being purely commercial and adding no meaning to my life. Then, after exploring being an *animal rights activist* and a *social worker*, I finally became an *environmentalist*, busy solving would solve all the world’s problems! However, an increasing exposure to the complexity of

developmental issues surrounding me (WTO protests, mindless industrialization, staggering rate of rural-urban migration, riots and wars) left me bewildered and confused!

I believed getting a degree in International Development from a reputed university, would provide me the wherewithal to change the world for the better. Well into a masters program in International Development, I set about preparing for my doctorate in Environmental Economics based on this premise.

According to my academic understandings, the third world could be developed by the benevolence of the first world aid agencies, executing projects that could be planned, executed, monitored and evaluated by ‘development experts’ through elaborate project proposals and reports. Like all my other international fellow learners, I positioned myself comfortably on the launch pad for a career in the UN or a multilateral organisation. My aim was to work hard, get to the top, and command enough power to make decisions that could change the world. I derived a world view which made me believe that if we could assign economic value to the scarce natural resources, then we would learn to use them wisely.

And yet, there was all along an uncomfortable feeling at the pit of my stomach all through, that urged me to get to the root of it before moving any further on this path. I took a break from the university and

decided to travel across rural India to learn ‘development’ firsthand.

For six months, I backpacked with a resolve to learn without any plan or agenda, and get at the root of the rather vague sense of discomfort about what I was taught. I was deeply touched by my experiences with the ordinary people and the land. What emerged was a society based on a very different set of values like simplicity, selflessness, humility, cooperation, trust, and reverence for nature, shooting down



Currently, Sangeetha lives in Chennai with her husband Rajiv. She can be reached by email at: [sriram.sangeetha@gmail.com](mailto:sriram.sangeetha@gmail.com)

all my notions and ideas about development. I was slowly coming to understand the complexity of the systemic rot, and could place a lot of, until then, seemingly independent pieces of the puzzle, together.

I stopped believing that tinkering here and there was going to help. The very worldview of people as being purely rational and selfish, and of nature as resources to be exploited to endlessly chase economic growth as a way towards human happiness was the problem that needed to be addressed. We needed to reclaim our own traditional worldview of nature as our mother and sustainer, of all life as sacred and one, of human happiness as lying outside materialism, and of change as something that essentially starts from within oneself and radiates out into the world. It was with the ‘educated’ mind, a creation of the modern processes of schooling that the real problem lay. I returned to India with a commitment to de-school my mind, and begin to truly learn by living a life that involved all my senses.

After the ten-year marathon, physical and mental ailments took over, bringing my work and personal search to a complete halt. I had to allow myself to be healed.

For a whole year now, I have been trying out an experiment in humility and reverence. Inspired by Fukuoka, every day that I spend in my garden, I have been learning to observe life with its yearning to express itself in all its glory and abundance.

Today, the purpose of my learning is no longer to ‘become something’. On the contrary, it is to shed my arrogance and learn from nature how to live and heal holistically. It is to learn how to be a humble participant in life’s beautiful processes.

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